

Moral Relativism and Homosexuality

Situational ethics and moral relativism are viewed negatively by many Christians, mainly because they can form a basis for circumventing commands of Scripture. Many believers refuse to deviate from any of the moral codes of the Bible, while others believe that at least some of them are culturally based and would no longer apply in our modern technological society.

Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul, in many circumstances, focused on the spirit and intent of the Law, rather than the letter of it. One example of this was Jesus' statement that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man, and not the other way around. It was OK for Jesus to violate certain Sabbath laws if it was beneficial and not harmful to our well-being. For example, it was OK to heal someone, or rescue an animal from danger, on the Sabbath, even though this was a violation of the "letter" of the law that no work be performed on the Sabbath.

What Jesus taught about the observance of the Sabbath was a form of situational ethics and moral relativism. The Apostle Paul agreed with Jesus and pointed out that Christians have been freed from the demands of the Law and are no longer bound by them, in the sense that their salvation does not depend on it. We are saved by grace and not by observance of the Law. At the same time, however, we are still morally obligated to obey the spirit and intent of the law. From a practical standpoint, it still makes good sense to observe the beneficial aspects of the law, mainly because the Law was given for our benefit. Paul emphatically pointed out that our freedom in Christ should never be used as an excuse for sin and immorality. Although all things are technically lawful from the standpoint of our standing with God, not all things are expedient or helpful (1 Cor. 10:23). Some behaviors are downright destructive and harmful, not only to the well-being of others, but ourselves as well.

Although saved by grace, Christians are not exempt from the law of sowing and reaping. In other words, we still suffer the negative consequences of our bad moral and ethical decisions. The purpose of these chastisements is the reformation and improvement of our moral character. God loves us unconditionally, but He still chastises us when we break the rules. Mostly, the chastisement takes the form of the natural consequences of our behavior. For example, if we engage in premarital or extramarital sex we run the risk of unwanted pregnancies, venereal disease, and damaged relationships. On the societal level, sexual promiscuity results in the breakdown of the family, with many negative cultural and financial consequences. The entire fabric that holds our society together is threatened by sexual promiscuity.

One could argue that extramarital sex might be OK if practiced "safely." The problem is that although various forms of "safe sex" might prevent unwanted pregnancies and venereal disease, many negative personal and social consequences still remain, especially if multiple partners are involved. In my view, sex that is truly "safe" and beneficial may only be found in the context of a monogamous relationship, where both partners are committed to one another for life. In my view, it wouldn't at all matter if the relationship were homosexual or heterosexual.

I believe that Biblical prohibitions against homosexuality were culturally-based and deemed important for the maintenance of social order in a patriarchal, agrarian society. Today those reasons no longer apply, so long as the sex is confined to a loving, monogamous relationship. There is nothing inherently sinful about being gay. The Bible does say that we were all "*wonderfully made*" by God (Psalm 139:14). If God is OK with the way we were made, then so should we.

The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of love as our primary motivation for Christian behavior. The greatest testimony Christians can offer to the world is our ability to love one another, despite our differences.